

Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories
Metis Association of the Northwest Territories

Statement of evidence of
PHOEBE NAHANNI, WILSON PELLISSEY,
JOHNNY CHARLIE, FREDDY GREENLAND,
BETTY NENICOCHÉ
before the
MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE INQUIRY
YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

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DENE LAND USE AND OCCUPANCY IN THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT

We are here to expound on a subject which to us is very ancient and enriching. That is our way of life. Our economy is based on hunting, trapping, and fishing. Long before any non-Dene ever set foot on our land, our ancestors lived and learned from each other, from the land and other beings on the land -- the animals, birds, the insects. The mysteries of nature reveal themselves, more and more through our experience on the land. Our way of life has been happening for a long long time before any non-Dene ever set foot on this land, and it is still happening today.

As you know, from generation to generation our ancestors have passed on information by word of mouth through legends and by relating personal experiences. The intricate values of our way of life are most appreciated by those who speak our languages. To the non-Dene such ways of recounting events may be subject to bias, error, misunderstanding, misinterpretation and oblivion. Let me say that we Dene understand these shortcomings to be part of human nature. But, when many of us first learned how to read and write English we were appalled by the shortsighted views held by the first non-Dene (white people) who met our ancestors and by the kinds of things they wrote.

In 1899 an Indian Affairs agent in reference to an Indian who was sentenced to death said:

"I have the honour to draw attention to the fact that the accused was from Great Slave Lake, a section of the country inhabited by Indians...which is not yet in touch with civilization, and that he can therefore hardly be regarded otherwise than as an untutored savage. I submit for your consideration the impossibility of judging only by whiteman's methods, the conduct of a savage governed by superstitions whose habits are entirely opposed to those of civilization."²

TO THE EDITOR:—I am writing you to advise you that I have been elected to the position of President of the American Medical Association for the year 1919-1920. I am very pleased to accept this honor and to be able to represent the Association at the annual meeting in New York City, December 15-18, 1919. I am sure that the Association will be able to accomplish its purpose and to bring about the reforms which are so much needed in the medical profession.

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Why were we being told to believe such atrocious things about ourselves when we knew that they were false and insidious? Don't our parents know that we are being taught these ignorant descriptions about our ancestors and about us? We soon learned that it is because they are interpreting the viability of our system of knowledge according to the criteria which have been established for western society's academic system. (Our parents told us a white man's mind works that way.) Linguists have demonstrated that no system of language is superior to another - although some may appear to be more complex than others, all are uniquely suited to the needs of the culture in which they evolved. In the same way, our oral tradition has evolved to preserve what is essential to the continued survival of our culture and way of life.

We understand that in white man's court great regard is placed on precedent, or stare decisis. We feel that the above description is an insult to our intelligence and although we know little about your laws, we trust that a more intelligent precedent has taken its place. However, judging from public expression through newspaper articles and statements by government officials, we are still very much the target of abuse for wanting to continue our way of life.

For example, on August 11, 1975, when Chief Frank T'Seleie said to you, Mr. Commissioner that if the natural gas pipeline were to be built, that it would be as if his soul were to be stolen; that he was willing to lay down his life to save the lands for northern children yet unborn; one of Canada's most circulated newspapers, from its oil capital, the Calgary Herald, read his statements as, and I quote, "meaningless hyperbole."

The editors then continue with some meaningless hyperbole of their own, in the following statement that is not only insensitive to the Dene position, but based on little more than wishful thinking:

"Evidence abounds in this part of the country that pipelines needn't be damaging to people or environment - especially covered pipelines, as a natural gas pipeline would be where conditions warranted. Even the way of life of northern people need not be affected greatly by the existence of a pipeline that doesn't require large concentrations of people for its operation."²

Another example from The Fort Smith Pilot,

"For too long, the native people of the north have been quite content to accept the 'whiteman's' money in its various forms. They have been quite content to accept welfare, free medical care, free education, free, free, free - everything free without their making a very sizeable contribution.

Perhaps it is our fault for being overly generous, since I feel, personally, that respect cannot be bought or donated but must be earned...

In the north, there is no lack of opportunity, there is no lack of education availability - right through to university - but there is a lack of incentive and responsibility. The talk of going back to "their old ways" is not realistic since, by the skill and funds of the whitemen, they have managed to stay healthier, alive longer and have food on their tables and money in their pockets, the land just could not support their present numbers quite apart from the fact that the N.W.T. has one of highest birth rates in the world."³

And finally, Native People,

(Native People) "given the opportunity, will not trade warm rooms in government-heated homes, and beef in the co-op store flown in on government planes, for the discomfort of the igloo and cariboo guts for breakfast."⁴

This editorial from the London Free Press cannot be quoted in its entirety. My point should be evident to anyone who reads it - let me just say that, besides its factual and statistical inaccuracy, it is a shining example of ignorant, ethnocentric, and insensitive interpretation of native culture by a whiteman.



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We also know that there are other non-Dene (white people) preferring the reasoned approach who have succinctly described our way of life as perplexing, complicated and intricate. For example, in response to the Dene Declaration, the Edmonton Journal stated in an editorial:

"The native people of the Canadian North are now faced with the same kind of social and economic pressures that dismembered and emasculated native cultures south of the 60th Parallel.

What they are saying in their plea for national recognition is that history should not be permitted to repeat itself with the same disastrous consequences for a minority group which is paradoxically the majority in the Northwest Territories.

They are asking that Canadian society recognize that special circumstances trigger special needs with respect to the preservation of cultural integrity.

They are asking a reasonable degree of self-determination in a territory where they are the majority, and they are asking that the government negotiate with them as a national group in the particular context of the bargaining for a just and equitable settlement of native claims.

Considered in that light, their proposals for a new structure of government in the North are ambitious, but they are certainly reasonable suggestions in a democratic society."⁵

We feel that the first set of remarks are unjust and slanderous and in response, we are taking the time to try and set things straight. We are doing this because the white people (non-Dene) are trying to change our way of life which they do not understand. If they did understand they would see that it is a good way of life and they would not be so destructive.

Our people have withstood many seasons and many cycles. We consider our way of life to be the most practical for the climate and the environment we live in. Our songs, dances, games and legends are expressions and reflections of it. Here are some views of some trappers who were interviewed over the last 2-3 years.

Willie MacDonald, Ft. MacPherson, Jan. 13, 1975 Age: 65

"But, wherever we go in the bush, we always see old signs, from long ago. We see old deadfall places and all this. We know that long before us this country been used lots and long time before that. People still using it. I mean the people that were brought up to the life of trapping and hunting. We belong to it, we belong to the land and we look at it like that land is our mother. That's where we're born and that's where we're going to go back. We're going to be part of this land when we die. There is no way we're going to leave it. That's why we think of this land. What else we got? Just land, land is our bank, it's our living, it's everything. Everything we got is this land. What we depend on next year coming is depending on this land. The land is the most precious thing we got."⁶

Alexis Potfighter, Detah, Sept. 15, 1974 Age: 76

"The wild food gives us strength and faith, as far as it goes, for the whole Indian people. They gave us faith and strength to do anything...Talking about land, we're asking for the land to live on, to do things, like we're doing now trapping. The land that we depend on must not stop. For we trap, hunt and fish on the land that is ours. This is why our great ancestors handed to us to protect it from any damage in our land..."⁷

Louis Moosenose, Lac La Martre, September 24, 1974 Age: 50

"This land was given to us to make our living for food, clothing and income...The land was given to us to look after it and the land was suppose to be protected. The land, the water and the animals are here for us to make living on it, and it's not to play with."⁸

Amen Tailbone, Rae Lakes, September 30, 1974 Age: 60

"The animals is our food, the land is our everything and the water is our drink, so the land is ours to keep as long as the sun is shining. The game warden should not give hunting licenses to their friends, because they do not kill animals for food, they kill animals for sports. The land, the water, and the animals are not here to play with. It was given to us to look after and protect it from enemies like white people. The white people are up to destroy everything they see, and the land is the only thing that we depend on it for everything, and it is not for sale."⁹

And still our way of life is being questioned in the way the white people want to understand it - land as property and separate from us. Sometimes we think we will be understood and have some optimism. Our elected people on March 24, 1973 have taken our views before the white man's court and stated their ownership of 450,000 square miles of land.

We understand that it was decided by the N.W.T. Court of Appeals, which is the Alberta Court of Appeals, that we could not register a claim on unpatented or unsurveyed land!

We now have asked to appear before the Supreme Court of Canada to appeal our case.

Over the years we have observed the changes, the limitations placed on our freedom (to be boss of ourselves) by the white peoples' government, the white peoples' laws and white peoples' teachings. We did not write the laws that govern us and those that affect our way of life such as the Migratory Birds Convention Act, Indian Act, Territorial Land Use Regulations, Game Ordinances, etc...and our silence in the past does not mean consent. We are participating in the white man's system not because we accept it but because we have no choice. We regard our participation as being temporary until such time as our right to choose our own institutions is recognized.

There are debates all over Canada between the Indians and white people over many things. When we see that the present white institutions do not even suit many white people, we hope that will demonstrate the inability of these institutions to meet our needs. In many important respects our position in Canada today is a magnification of the experience of a vast number of Canadians. In spite of our obvious exclusion from the market economy we continue to be subject to policies and programs which assume our participation. Those who are excluded by the market are paradoxically blamed for its inability to meet their needs. Hence, instead of the needed reallocation of economic and political power to the excluded, resources are reallocated to a "responsible" bureaucracy which then controls and administers them instead of the intended recipients. Such has been our experience and as the economy becomes more concentrated and less democratic (less responsible to expressed social needs) in its determination of resource allocation, such is the experience of a growing proportion of Canadians.

Not only does the bureaucracy serve a political elite whose power base depends on the continuing inequities of the economy, but it has a mind and tremendous power of its own. Social change is becoming more difficult to effect rather than less difficult, since the essence of bureaucratic development is to give a wider group of people a vested interest in the status quo. Every social problem has its parasitic bureaucratic constituency. Without "Indian problems" where would the experts of DIAND seek employment? What would become of their salaries? (\$70,066,000 1975/76)¹⁰ Their consultants (\$93,091,000 1975/76).¹¹ Instead of solving the problems it was designed to alleviate, the bureaucracy gives them an added dimension while at the same time providing a protective front for the flourishing causal forces.

The bureaucracy in turn spawns its own constituency of parasitic enterprises, and nowhere is this more obvious than in the bureaucratic capitals of Canada, such as Ottawa and Yellowknife. Where bureaucratic populations are not simply functionally, but also politically significant quantities those with negligible political and economic power are worse off than ever before. This is the situation of our people, us Dene in the North. It is a situation we share with other poor people and oppressed minorities throughout the country, but here it is all the more outrageous since we Dene and Inuit are in the majority in the N.W.T.

While common experiences tie us to certain groups within Canadian society at large, many of our major problems stem directly from white peoples' ignorance of our differences. We believe a healthy society is not where we pretend such differences do not exist but one which recognizes and appreciates these differences and their contribution to the future development of society in general. A society as wealthy as Canada's which continues to perpetuate, even compound, the miseries of certain of its professed members is a sick society. It should be recognized that what potential contribution our efforts have to offer, is offered with the intention of making it well.

I would like to elaborate a bit on our culture by first defining how I'm using it and directing my ensuing statements in regards to it to the white peoples' institutions.

In our culture, emphasis is placed on the relative importance of human beings, land and environment, and animals and birds. Without the land and environment and the animals and birds we could not survive. This realization was not derived from nowhere, it was derived from years of experience and adaptation. And the land and the animals cannot continue to live and survive without our understanding and respect.

This creation was neither produced from our intelligence, nor our hands. We are part of it. So are all animals, birds, fish, and insects. We all inhabit this environment (and ultimately this planet). Therefore, this realization is encouraged amongst us to ensure in the long run a continuation of resources.

When a human being occupies a space in the environment, his behaviour can be destructive or complementary to that space. (The former has been more evident since the white man moved on our land. It is not only an observation if it is fact).

We understand that changes occur in human beings, environment and in animals. These changes evolve in growth, seasons and movement and we are continually learning from this evolution through our experiences from our way of life. Our way of life has been tested over hundred of years - it makes a lot of sense to us and we like to return to the land again and again and we want our children to have the option to experience the same things.

Unfortunately, the relativity of cultural concepts has rarely been understood by many whites and this ignorance is inherent in colonialism. White people's institutions have developed to the point where they cannot afford to recognize differences. Paradoxically, it is the importance of acceptance of differences, so integral to our culture which has made us so vulnerable. You, in effect, put away those who do not "fit"...your older people, your deviant personalities...while we have always found room for all but those who threatened our physical survival.

As for your economy and your bureaucracy we asked for neither but they both rule our lives because they cannot make room for our right to decide for ourselves. The question of whether or not we wish to reject them has become academic, but you have not given us the means to cope with them. Our choices in this respect have been severely limited by your institutions and we have dealt with them chiefly by ignoring or avoiding them. Unfortunately,

to choose to participate in a game whose rules we have played no part in deciding is to submit to uncomfortable meaningless situations but, our participation is temporary and in times of hope it appears more than the situation non-participation affords us. We are forced to live with illusive values.

A glance at your own history shows that when your evolution demanded the loss of certain rights on the part of particular interests, for the perceived good of society at large, you have compensated these interests generously. However, because you have never recognized us as full citizens, nor given any credence to the value we place on our way of life and the land so important to it, you have never taken us seriously. An example of your generosity which we are aware of on a day-to-day basis is that of the Hudson's Bay Co. To begin with, that company was illegitimately given a monopoly of trade and exploitation over our land in return for a pittance. For years the Company thrived on the economic surplus attributable almost entirely to the efforts of the native people themselves. It was our way of life that was disrupted, and it was our land that provided the economic base for the wealth of the H.B.C., but when Canada required the West for expansion it was, incredibly, the Hudson's Bay Company that received compensation. And exceedingly generous it was too! The cash settlement and lands about the company's posts were a considerable endowment, but it was the vast land grant on the Prairies that provided the security for the subsequent success and fortune of the Bay.

The land was partly sold to settlers and fully exploited for its oil and mineral wealth.

Why have our interests been neglected? Why, today, are the interests of the large corporations still receiving priority attention, while we shout to be heard? How is it that oil and mineral leases have been signed without our being consulted?

We now realize that the Government of Canada is not a great deal freer than we are to act in the best interest of Canadian society. We know that one reason for the lack of resources for the purposes of the Dene is the inordinate power over resource allocation in our economy wielded by "private governments." Apparently, economic power is the most important and relevant form of political power as well.

It is vital to us to achieve a degree of economic independence if we are ever to experience political independence, and it is partly to this end that our land use research is directed.

LAND USE AND OCCUPANCY RESEARCH

For a year and a half the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories was involved in negotiating a proposal and budget with D.I.A.N.D. to document data on traditional land use. At the time it was clear that no agency, government or private, was planning to undertake such a study. We knew that anthropologists and white researchers had previously attempted to integrate a study of our land-based activities into their theses. But our community leaders and community people expressed their dislike of the invasion of their privacy by outsiders who didn't speak their language. We know from our past experiences that government research by white researchers has never improved our lives. Usually white researchers spy on us, the things we do, how we do them, when we do them and so on. After all these things are written in their jargon they go away and neither they nor their reports are ever seen again.

We have observed this and the I.B.N.W.T. resolved to try its best to see that in future research involves the Dene from beginning to end.

When an agreement was reached between D.I.A.N.D. and I.B.N.W.T. to go ahead with the Land Use and Occupancy Research, the Government insisted that we use qualified "experts" to give the research a professional quality. We accepted this condition as being part of your ways and we complied with it. Whenever it was necessary to use the expertise of white researchers, they worked only as consultants and always under the direction of the Dene.

The objectives of this research project were:

1. To form an information base upon which a just settlement of our grievances and land claims may be built, with an eye to securing our continuing benefit from the use of our land.
2. To provide a medium for re-establishing the bond between our young and their past, a bond essential to our future independence as Canadian citizens.

3. To provide us with material essential to us in deciding any action to be undertaken by us, in the event of a fair settlement, to improve our lot as we see fit.
4. To provide the people of Canada with a record of land use and occupancy in the Northwest Territories by people of Dene descent, from the distant past down to the present.
5. To provide the people of Canada with an understanding of the importance of our land to the integrity of our culture, our identity, our present way of life, and to our future hopes.
6. To convey to the people of Canada the destruction inflicted on our civilization by the ethnocentric ignorance of the white man.
7. To give a truer appreciation of the costs of the present path of development the white man has chosen in the North, in terms of the Dene as a people with a right to survival as a people, and with a right to control and direct the changes the present and future force on them.
8. To give us an opportunity to present once again, without the confusion of middlemen, and in accordance with our own aims, the Dene experience and point of view as only we can present it.

The primary assumption underlying the objectives was and is that by far the greatest proportion of the expertise required to carry out this research and to articulate and express the needs and aspirations of the northern Dene is to be found in the Dene community itself. As a people with little room for choice we know how our responses have been structured by the white institutions we must deal with, and by those who are not of us but profess to work in our interests. Not only was the decision to employ outside "experts" scrutinized carefully but such experts had to be prepared to work under our direction in a manner rarely evidenced with professional researchers. It was and is our objectives, not theirs, which must be served.

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An important implication of this approach is that the value of the research experience to those most directly affected by the outcome of any settlement of outstanding claims will not be lost to some group of consultants from the south. Quite apart from the value of the ultimate product of this research project, equally vital was the potential of the research experience in informing and promoting discussion amongst our people concerning our past and possible future paths of development.

While the objectives above are of primary importance it is recognized that any appeal for a just settlement of grievances must be made in the whitemen's "tongue", as it were. Hence there was a need for those well practiced in the art, to translate our findings into terms likely to be understood and recognized by those in a position to accept or reject these appeals. Such externally recognized experts were called upon when necessary to advise on methodology and in orientation. They were also required to undertake certain technical efforts entirely, such as the Draftsmen employed.

We carried out all fieldwork ourselves and utilized the advice of relevant specialists when necessary, and employed material already collected and compiled by the government, e.g. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Natural and Cultural Affairs Dept. of the N.W.T. Government, and in particular the Trapline Management and Regulations, research papers on Game Branch statistics.

In compliance with our objectives our main information source has been and is still essentially from the hunters and trappers themselves.

The initial step in implementing our objectives required us to agree on a methodology. In early December, 1973, the I.B.N.W.T. began recruiting research fieldworkers. The applicants had to be fluent in their own Dene language; as well we asked if they could read and write English; if they couldn't they were not rejected for it.

In January 1974, we held a training workshop in Fort Simpson with the eight recruited research fieldworkers. This was to familiarize fieldworkers with each other, to explain the objectives, purpose, and context of the project, and to enable the resource people (experts) to discuss techniques that could be used in collecting and arranging their findings.

Our intention was to interview Dene hunters and trappers in the following communities:

Delta Region: Aklavik, Inuvik, Ft. MacPherson, Arctic Red River
North Mackenzie: Ft. Good Hope, Colville Lake, Ft. Franklin, Ft. Norman
South Mackenzie: Ft. Wrigley, Ft. Simpson-Jean Marie, Ft. Liard,
 Nahanni Butte, Trout Lake, Ft. Providence-Kakisa, Hay River
North Slave: Rae, Edzo, Lac La Martre, (Marian Lake, Snare Lake)
 Rae Lakes, Yellowknife, Detah
South Slave: Resolution, Ft. Smith, Snowdrift

The agreement with D.I.A.N.D. which I mentioned earlier covering the terms of the project and permitting funding was signed on May 24, 1974. It was a commitment from D.I.A.N.D. to fund the research for 1974/75 and 1975/76. Two years of research on a subject as old and continuous as our land-based renewable-resource economy (hunting, trapping, and fishing) could not possibly produce an exhaustive study. We therefore decided to work within the time constraints by obtaining a 1/3 sample or approximately 30%, of the total number of trappers in each of the above communities. Those trappers 30 years of age and over, we considered, would be best to provide us with substantial experience from and information on our economy. There are some exceptions to this, of course, judging from traplines covered by some hunters and trappers younger than 30 years of age.

To show the extent of land use and occupancy, we had to gather the following information:

A representation on maps of all the lands we have occupied and used for as long as we can remember and right to the present; and of how we use the land, what the land means to us, as a people, at present.

We listed several questions that would help us meet the above goal:

- 1) When did you first begin to trap alone?
- 2) Where did you trap? If you moved to other areas, why? What did you hunt and trap? Where did you fish? Where did you set up camps? What kind of camp? Do you go to this camp every year?
- 3) How much does land mean to you? What are your views on land?

The response we received from the interviews were recorded in writing in Map Biography or Informant Sheets and/or from tapes to be transcribed.

The collection of interviews is almost complete. A total of 396 men have been interviewed to date.

We would use topographical maps at the scales of 1:500,000 and/or 1:250,000 and delineate the travel routes and traplines using coloured pencils (one colour for each trapper). We designed a map code for the subsistence animals hunted, the fur-bearing animals trapped, the season travelled and method or mode of travel.
(attached)

The month following this workshop (mid-February to mid-March 1974) was a familiarization period during which the fieldworkers visited homes explaining the nature of their tasks, developing community maps and testing some of the approaches developed in the first training workshop. Each fieldworker attempted to interview a small number of informants concerning general land-use patterns of family groups, as opposed to individual trappers.

A second training workshop was held in Fort Norman for a period of two weeks at the end of March, 1974. An initial four day shared assessment of the fieldworkers' first month was held in conjunction with fieldworkers from the Band Development program before the research fieldworkers began a week and a half long trial run of the land use survey. An objective of approximately 30% coverage of active trappers in the community was set and met. Lifetime biographies of each individual's activity pattern on traditional land use were compiled. This trial run provided the necessary test of the research methodology and provided the fieldworkers with tangible results of a most encouraging nature.

The kinds of traditional land use are the following:

- (1) Subsistence hunting - all seasons from their camps, e.g. moose hunting
- (2) Seasonal hunting - e.g. caribou hunting
- (3) Part-time hunting - all seasons based from a community
- (4) Spring hunting and trapping - end of March-April-May, e.g.
beaver and muskrats
- (5) Winter trapping - October-November to February-March for fur-bearing animals
- (6) Fishing - all seasons
- (7) Fishing - spring, summer at fish camps

During the course of the research the fieldworkers had been collecting data in their respective regions with an initial target of approximately 30% coverage of the active trappers over 30 years of age. Depending on availability and preference, maps either at 1:500,000 or 1:250,000 scales were used to depict personal data from the trappers, including Dene place names. In all cases it was necessary to identify certain Dene place names before interviewing. These place names were verified throughout the interviews.

The map code that was designed and accepted for use is on the attached sheet.

The data on the original maps were collated by community. In other words, one set of collated maps consists of all the interviews completed for one community. (Some of these collated maps exceed the required quota, indicating land use patterns for more than 1/3 of the hunters and trappers in the area.)

We chose three major codes for the collated maps: travel routes and trails and traplines; camp and living sites; and subsistence and fur-bearing animals.

The travel routes on the collated maps accentuate the degree of use and importance of certain routes over time and space. This means that the range of percentages of the route codes (1) less than 25% of sample, (2) 25-49% of the sample, (3) 50% or more of the sample shows the importance placed on them by each community sample throughout their lifetime to the present.

Closely related to the trails, traplines, and travel routes are the living and campsites.

The spatial representation of subsistence and fur-bearing animals indicates the approximate site or general area where the specific animals were hunted or trapped, all seasons, throughout the trappers' lifetime to the present.

Finally, the interviews for one community are collated on 1:500,000 and 1:250,000 scale maps.

present. It projects the same codes as on the collated maps. I would like to point out that the range of percentages of route codes is consistent throughout the composite map, despite the differences in sample figures. This is because the percentages of importance and emphasis placed on certain routes by each community is equal.

The greatest frustration we encountered in data collection, predictably, was the difficulty of locating the men we wished to interview - much of the time they were in the bush trapping, and were inaccessible to our researchers. (This minor frustration was, of course, far outweighed by its positive aspect - the men's absence was additional empirical proof of the widespread continued use of the land that we had set out to document.)

Another limitation we encountered was that it was simply impossible for every trapper interviewed to supply us with complete information on all his land-use activities throughout the years. There were various reasons for this - researchers couldn't spend as much time with each individual as would have been optimum; or informants grew too tired to continue an interview before they could impart the wealth of information they possessed to the interviewer. If there is any inadequacy in our research, therefore, it is that we have only been able to present a very sketchy outline of the continuing land-use patterns of only approximately 1/3 of the men who are currently involved in hunting, fishing, and trapping. When looking at the maps, you must keep in mind that, even if you multiply in your imagination to 3 times the number of lines and routes indicated here, this still represents only a very minimal presentation of the extent of use and occupancy of Dene lands by the Dene as it occurs today.

We regret that we are unable to provide you with a final comprehensive report and finalized set of maps at this time. However, one important conclusion that will be included in the final report should be brought out here - i.e. that our research indicates that there are approximately 1,075 men actively engaged in hunting and trapping at the present time.

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We are currently in the process of taking the finished maps back to the communities to be thoroughly checked by all the trappers one last time, to ensure that no significant areas of land use have not been indicated. The final written report will not be completed until this process is finished.

We would like to enter our final report and maps at a later date.

IMPLICATIONS OF OUR FINDINGS FOR THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EVIDENCE
PREPARED BY THE APPLICANTS:

We believe that the socio-economic evidence prepared by the applicants was based on inadequate research and lack of relevant data, and that the majority of their conclusions cannot be substantiated. Furthermore, the results of our research directly contradict a great many of the conclusions contained in the following studies:

- Section 14-C, Canadian Arctic Gas Pipelines Ltd. application
- Communities of the Mackenzie, prepared by Van Ginkel Associates Ltd.
- Gemini North Ltd.
- Part 5, Public Interest; Section C - Socio-Economic Statement, Foothills Pipelines Ltd.

I will cite a few specific cases chosen from the many possible examples to illustrate the inadequacies of the applicants' data; I believe these will suffice to prove my point.

From Page 4, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"The applicant is aware that for many northern residents, and particularly native people, the type and extent of economic development thus far experienced in the territorial North has brought relatively limited measurable or on-going benefit."

It is evident from this remark that the Applicant is either seriously misinformed or does not believe that traditional economic activity merits the term "economic development". The Dene are used to this colonial assumption but are not prepared to accept it. The Applicant has described rather than explained various aspects of disruption the Dene and Inuit have experienced since contact with Whites.

The explanation for many changes is not that they are inevitable or god-given (as the Van Ginkel study for Arctic Gas implies) but that they were imposed on us willfully by those who devalued the way we lived in relation to their own ways.

We have never pretended that the only future for us is a "return to the past" in the sense of all Dene living off the land. Nevertheless, our evidence clearly shows that if support were given to land-based activities, comparable to the public support given to other sectors of the economy, and to the oil industry for example, there are many Dene who would continue to use the land as our maps clearly indicate they have used it.

I object therefore to the suggestion that "economic development" does not include activities which have supported us well in the past, still do today and will, if given proper recognition, in the future.

From Page 4, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"...the movement from isolated hunting camps to an employment way of life in larger settlements dominated by non-natives... confirmed, for an increasing number of native Northerners, the end of one lifestyle and the beginning of another.

Implicit in this fundamental locational and socio-economic change was that there could be no reversion to the self-sufficient economy of the past: the economy of the North would have to continue to grow on the basis of the economic development of the natural resources of the region; the social environment would have to make the relevant adaptations."

I would like to stress that the suggestion that our social environment will simply have to adapt to externally determined forms of economic development is not either correct or acceptable to the Dene. We do not see why our recent colonial experience is the necessary pattern for the future. In fact, we seek to establish economic activities consistent with our social environment, and not the reverse. What the Applicant calls "relevant adaptations" I fear are what we would call cultural genocide and social disruption. The sort of reasoning implicit in this quotation is typical of colonialism and to us provides further argument why we must have our rights recognized before this colonial type of thinking further disrupts our "social environment".

I would like to be so bold as to argue that the oil companies would find it easier to make the "relevant adaptations" to the reality of the existence of a Dene nation whose right to exist (and change) on its own terms is the highest priority.

From Page 6, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"...attitudes in the study region would appear to parallel those found in any community that has undergone partial change and now faces the prospect of an acceleration of the pace of change."

Once again, this kind of simplistic comparison ignores what the Dene have said over and over again in the community hearings - we are not objecting to change, but to the threat posed to our survival as a distinct people, a nation, by the proposed pipeline.

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From SC 44, Section 4.3, of Foothills Pipe Lines Ltd.'s application:

"...a situation exists whereby all employable northerners within the impact area will have pipeline employment if it is their desire. Indications are that the majority will choose pipeline employment leaving very little time and manpower for traditional pursuits.

...the low entrance rate of young natives into traditional pursuits combined with progressive withdrawal of older trappers will result in a lower number of people engaged in trapping. Skill acquisition vital to continued activity in this sector will also be impaired."

and from Pages 6-7, Section 14-C of the Arctic Gas application:

"The Applicant believes that its observation is correct that most younger people are not interested in attempting to earn a living through practicing the traditional pursuits, even though they respond to their traditions and practice them, at times avocationally. But as to occupation, they are more interested in education and training that enable them to enter the wage economy.

"...the commitment of the younger people to the life in the settlement is less marked than that of the older people..."

While our evidence and that given in the community hearings would refute the suggestion that younger people are rejecting the land-based economy I would like to point out that we have been scarred by several decades of colonial experience. What the Applicants point to as signs of autonomous change among the Dene are as often the symptoms of alienation, the results of colonial interference, not an indication of free choice. In reality a generation of our people are still experiencing the trauma of suddenly being taken from a stable way of life into an alien education system which only provided them with Grade 2 to Grade 9 education with no guarantee of sufficient wage employment.

There is also a generation who see the values of our way of life who have chosen to work on the land settlement (through band councils, Metis locals and Dene organizations and other community projects for the Dene) because of its long-term benefits to our way of life.

Our land settlement must allow us to re-establish control over education in order to bring to a halt this kind of alienation. I am not arguing that all young Dene will choose to pursue land-based activities, but there will not be the sanctions against such a choice, such as exist under a colonial educational system. Furthermore, a proper level of support to the trapping industry would undoubtedly result in more young people planning a future in that area.

From Page 17, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"A survey made in 1972 revealed that only 96 persons, out of a study region population of 23,600 and a male working age population of 7,830 were engaged in full-time and regular part-time trapping."

The same applicant states on Page 19 of Sec. 14-F on Northerner Training Program, March 1974, that

"...of the Western Arctic population (on a line from Fort Smith to Pond Inlet incl.) Native male population in this area living off the land is 58..."

The study by Van Ginkel Associates Ltd. states the following, on Page 3:

"Hunting and trapping provided the major source of income for relatively few persons. The Gemini North Limited survey, made in 1972 estimated that a total of 84 persons were engaged in full time or regular part-time trapping."

Foothills Pipe Lines, in its submission, relies on the Gemini North study, and states that there are 94 trappers in the impact area.

Finally, on Page 34 of the Van Ginkel study, it states that:

"The arbitrary assumption is made that the present employment of 84 persons involved full time in hunting and trapping will increase to 100 by 1985."

I am not entirely certain what the applicants sought to prove by this assertion, but I can assure you that the suggestion that there are only 96 (or 59 or 84 or 94) active trappers- and possibly 100 by 1985 -/in the Study Region appears ludicrous to any Dene. It is especially ludicrous when compared to the figure of 1,075 trappers which our data indicate. I am quite sure that if the applicants had a proper appreciation of the Dene nation and its relationship to the land, the pointlessness of these statistics would become apparent. It is also clearly questionable to draw one's conclusions about the direction in which Dene society is moving from the colonial experience of the last 30 years or so when we are talking of a civilization based on thousands of years of land-based existence!

Once again, what the applicants point to as a sign of progressive change is viewed by the Dene in the context of our own history as an indication that we must regain our rightful control over our land and our destiny. Imposed change can never provide an argument for further imposition.

From Page 17, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"As discussed, the value of fur, fish and game harvested is a small proportion of the total income in the study region. This is not likely to alter over the study period. At the same time, the aggregated figures conceal the fact that the traditional pursuits continue to be relatively important in terms of income in the smaller communities and that traditional activities, as a reversion to a life-style or simply for recreation, are apparently of increasing importance to the people in the study region.

And from the Foothills application:

"It is expected that the decline in the number of full-time trappers will be off-set by an increase in the number of part-time trappers... The recreational and leisurely nature of this pursuit could well be a factor in attracting native northerners into this sector. The beneficial aspects of trapping for two or three days a month, minus the risks and uncertainties, cannot be discounted, especially when supplemented by wages and assurance of continued employment."

I find these statements ambiguous and lacking in perception. To imply that hunting and trapping activities are "simply for recreation..." indicates that we do them for sport - and frankly I find this notion lacking in comprehension and appreciation that we have great respect for the animals we hunt and trap.

I am sure I do not need to emphasize again the obvious fact that no kind of quantification can convey a correct appreciation of our way of life. When the electricity fails in Yellowknife the whites raise the alarm but the Dene are unaffected. Our incomes form a small proportion of the total income of the N.W.T. but that is as much an indication that we wish to remain a distinct people and are not prepared to compromise our existence for a larger proportion of "total income". As some of our other evidence will show, when you remove the influence of bureaucratic and mining industry incomes, land-based activity of the Dene assumes the major proportion of Dene income. That is the relevant comparison, if any.

From Page 31, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"The construction and operation of the pipeline can be expected to be essentially neutral in terms of its impact on game, fur and fish and the ability of Northerners to harvest these resources."

This assertion would be laughable if it were not so potentially disastrous. It is either the statement of the blind and ignorant, or it is a lie to which any Dene can attest. If my evidence along with that of the hundreds of Dene who have spoken out in the community hearings has not made this clear, then we are lost! I find it very difficult to believe that such an obviously false conclusion could have been placed on the record in good faith. Such a contention breeds a well-justified mistrust of the oil industry on the part of the Dene.

On the same page, the Applicant states:

"Any potential that exists for negative impacts during the construction phase will be minimized as a consequence of the policies of the Applicant: utilized areas will be avoided to the extent possible..."

From Section 4.4 of the Foothills application:

"...the pipeline will be constructed and operated so that disturbance to areas vital to hunting, trapping, and fishing is kept within acceptable limitations."

"...utilized areas will be avoided to the extent possible..." states the Applicant. It is not evident to us that the Applicant is serious.

Look at the map. Extrapolate in your mind, land-use 3 times more than what you now see. Can you imagine any area where a proposed route will not create a negative impact? Where on this map could negative effects be avoided? I do not see any on this map.

The Arctic Gas application further states, on the same page, that "...only a very small proportion of the study region will be affected by the project..."

This contention is also a lie for anyone with only a remote appreciation of what it means to be Dene and the relationship between us and our land. There are many other assertions of this nature in both applications - I mention here only a few. All of them imply complete ignorance, willful or not, of the existence of the Dene as a people struggling to survive as a cultural and political entity.

From Page 34, Section 14-C, Arctic Gas application:

"The transition from a hunting economy to a wage economy is predictably difficult. The transition must be made, however, if the social and economic needs of the native people are to be satisfied."

I cannot make out whether this patronizing remark is a threat or simply a cynical appreciation of colonial realpolitik. For it is true that in the colonial world the Dene have inhabited of late, this is exactly the choice we have been given - become wage earners in projects alien to Dene needs, or else you will not receive the social and economic support which is the right of all Canadians.

We Dene seek to demolish this kind of non-choice by establishing first, before any colonial project of the dimension of the proposed pipeline, our right to a choice, to the possibility of relevant forms of economic development, to political control over the evolution of Dene Society, and to the resource base upon which these rights must be realistically grounded. The applicants' evidence only confirms our determination to obtain such recognition before any pipeline is approved.

CONCLUSIONS:

We set out to do this research with clearly stated objectives which we knew had been attempted by a very few white researchers but had never been realized possible by government experts and industry experts. We also knew that neither the former nor the latter can ever state our case satisfactorily nor will they sweat for our self-determination.

The purpose of this research was for us to be able to tell you what we Dene already knew - that we have used and still use the land extensively.

We set out to provide the people of Canada with a record of Dene land use and occupancy in the N.W.T. from the distant past down to the present;

to provide the people of Canada with an understanding of the importance of our land to the integrity of our culture, our identity, our present way of life and to our future hopes;

and to convey to the people of Canada a sense of the destruction inflicted on our civilization by the ethnocentric ignorance of the whiteman.

The maps as they stand show an intense use of land, even though that is a representation of only about 30% of hunters and trappers, and mostly those over 30 years of age. Had we interviewed 100%, there would be three times as many trails, routes, and traplines on these maps as there actually are.

We have considerable experience in surveying the environment we live in. Our ancestors navigated and when the whitemen travelled on our land, it was with the advice and help of our ancestors. We have Dene place names for all our camps, for the lakes, the rivers, the mountains - indicating that we know the topography of our land intimately. Before Mackenzie came and claimed the river to be named after him, we called it Deb-cho.

In spite of the problems of misunderstandings and misinterpretations we experience with the whitemen, we continue to maintain and view ourselves as a Nation.

Through the evidence of our land use and occupancy, we are showing you that we have tolerated at much cost to our culture the path of development you have chosen for us, and from here on it is our right to control and direct the changes that affect our survival as a people.

From the interviews we had with 26 young people it is self-evident that the bond between young and old and their past is essential to our future independence.

Our field work reinforces the statements made by the Dene at the community hearings that our attitude towards our land has far more substance than is fully appreciated by the oil and gas companies and government.

The maps clearly show what the Dene have been saying all along before your legal institutions - that we have been here for hundreds and thousands of years; this is our land, and our life. This is the most graphic demonstration of the truth that we Dene own 450,000 square miles of land.

That the proposed oil and gas pipeline routes and construction sites conflict with our land-based activities is obviously shown by cartographic representation of those activities. These routes show no sign of regard for our trails, travel routes, and traplines, and our camps. The implications of such intrusions not only affect the trails, travel routes and traplines; they also indiscriminately and without discretion affect the animals, fish lakes, and the environment and our way of life.

Producing these maps has been a lot of work. Over two years, about two dozen people have worked on this project and at any moment in time about a dozen people were working on it. The result is that data now exists on Dene land use that simply was not available before.

I emphasize this point because it means that statements made about Dene land use, by government officials and the hired "experts" of the pipeline companies are based on - on what? If you do not have the "facts", how can you, as a scientist, draw any conclusions at all? As I understand it, experts, even when they agree on the facts, can still disagree on what the facts really mean. But when one side in a discussion has really no evidence worth calling facts, then we can only wonder how they manage to draw conclusions at all. Surely this is anything but using a scientific method. Hopefully now that the real facts on Dene land use patterns are for the first time available to non-Dene, the experts of the pipeline companies will take advantage of these facts to rewrite their studies.

Footnotes:

- 1 Fombleau, R., As Long As This Land Shall Last. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1975. p. 68
- 2 editorial, Calgary Herald, Calgary, Alberta, August 11, 1975.
- 3 editorial, The Pilot, Fort Smith, N.W.T., July, 1975.
- 4 editorial, London Free Press, London, Ontario, October 10, 1975.
- 5 editorial, Edmonton Journal, Edmonton, Alberta, July 24, 1975.
- 6 quotes from interviews obtained in Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories Land Use Research.
- 7, 8, 9 Ibid
- 10 Government of Canada. Estimate For Fiscal Year Ending, March 31, 1976. Section 10 - 18.
- 11 Ibid

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE TO BE PRESENTED BY WILSON PELLISSEY,
JOHNNY CHARLIE, FREDDY GREENLAND AND BETTY MENICOCHÉ

Wilson Pellissey will speak to the accuracy and relevance of the results of the Land Use and Occupancy research, based on his own extensive experience in land-based activities in the Fort Wrigley, N.W.T. area. He will elaborate on the evidence presented on the maps.

Johnny Charlie will speak to the accuracy and relevance of the results of the Land Use and Occupancy research, based on his own extensive experience in land-based activities in the Fort MacPherson, N.W.T. area. He will elaborate on the evidence presented on the maps.

Freddy Greenland will give evidence on how the research field work was carried out in the Delta region, based on his experience as a fieldworker.

Betty Menicoche will give evidence on how the research field work was carried out in the Mackenzie-Liard communities, based on her experience as a fieldworker.

Phoebe Nahanni

Present Position: Director, Land-Use and Occupancy Research,
Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T.

Education: B.A. 1972, University of Western Ontario,
London, Ontario. Major in Geography, Faculty
of Social Science.

Work Experience: 1969 - 71, Summer employment, fieldwork,
Community Development, Indian-Eskimo Assn.
Yellowknife, and other communities.

1972 - Summer, research methods of Computer
Assisted Instruction (CAI) under Dr. J. Hart,
Computer Science Dept., University of Western
Ontario, London, Ontario.

1972-73 - Research on Native Communications
in Canada - background for a Cabinet Document,
Native Citizens Group, Citizenship Branch,
Secretary of State, Ottawa, Ontario.

1973 - Summer, Co-ordinator for CAI Experiment
on teaching Dogrib Language in co-operation
with Tree of Peace, Yellowknife, N.W.T.

1973-to present, employed by the Indian
Brotherhood of the N.W.T. as Research Director.

WILSON WELLSLEY

Present position: Trapper from Fort Wrigley, N.W.T.

Professional experience: Approximately 55 years of
full-time hunting and trapping.

JOHNNY CHARLIE

Present position: Chief of Fort MacPherson, N.W.T.

Professional experience: Approximately 30 years of full-time hunting and trapping.

FREDDY GREENLAND

Present position: Chief of Aklavik, N.W.T.

Professional experience: 1 year as a fieldworker for the
Land Use and Occupancy research of the Indian
Brotherhood of the N.W.T.

BETTY MERICOCHÉ

Professional experience: One year as a fieldworker for the
Land Use and Occupancy research of the Indian Brotherhood
of the N.W.T.

ARTICLES

- CALGARY HERALD, editorial, August 11, 1975, Calgary, Alberta.
EDMONTON JOURNAL, editorial, July 24, 1975, Edmonton, Alberta.
LONDON FREE PRESS, editorial, October 10, 1975, London, Ontario.
THE PILOT, editorial, July, 1975, Ft. Smith, N.W.T.

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- Cunning, Peter A. and Mickelson, Neil H. - NATIVE RIGHTS IN CANADA, The Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, General Publishing Co. Ltd. Toronto, 1972, 2nd edition.
- Embleau, Eric, OMI - AS LONG AS THIS LAND SHALL LAST, McClelland and Stewart Ltd., Toronto, 1975.
- Government of Canada - ESTIMATE FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 1976, Ottawa, 1975.
- Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. - MAP BIOGRAPHIES OF SOME TRAPPERS IN THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT, unpublished, data part of the Land Use and Occupancy Research by the Indian Brotherhood of N.W.T. Research Program, 1973-75.
- Laher, Peter and Deskhust, Graham, LAND REGULATION IN THE CANADIAN NORTH, Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, November, 1973.
- Van Ginkel Associate Ltd., COMMUNITIES OF THE MACKENZIE, EFFECTS OF THE HYDROCARBON INDUSTRY, Canadian Arctic Gas Study Ltd., Calgary, January, 1975.
- Boothills Pipelines Ltd., PART 5 - PUBLIC INTEREST SECTION C - SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATEMENT, Calgary, April, 1975.
- Gemini North, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PROPOSED ARCTIC GAS PIPELINE IN NORTHERN CANADA, 1972.

APPENDIX C: LAND USE BY YOUNG PEOPLE

NOTE: Although primarily trappers over the age of 30 were interviewed, in order to obtain as thorough information as possible on patterns of land-use, a number of younger trappers (age 30 and under) were also included in the sample. This appendix represents a brief summary of the information obtained from these men, and substantiates our conclusion that many young people are not rejecting land-based economic activities in favor of the wage economy.

A total of 26 young men age 30 years and under, from 13 different communities, gave the interviewers information based on their extensive experience with the land.

The average age of these young trappers and hunters was 26. (A complete breakdown by age is included at the end of this report.) The average age at which they started trapping alone was 15 years. The average number of years of continued use of the land for the sample was 11 years.

Employment/trapping patterns for the 26 men break down roughly as follows:

Full-time hunters/trappers - 6 men

Part-time hunters/trappers interspersed with occasional wage or seasonal labour - 13 men

Full-time wage labour with incidental or negligible hunting and trapping - 5 men

Comments:

These interviews substantiate the point of view expressed almost universally among the Ewe young people - that the young people are not losing their attachment to the land and land-based subsistence activities; but are, in fact, more aware of the importance and value of the land because of their experience in a foreign culture with very different values.

Even those young people who are, by force of circumstance or by choice, involved in a full-time labor or education situation which necessitates being away from the land, do not consider themselves as having abandoned land-based activities in favor of

Rather, they realize that in order for Dene to achieve self-determination both on a personal level and as a nation, this involvement with the dominant culture is a necessity. Most are able to reconcile this role with their continued attachment to land-based activities, both by going into the bush to hunt, trap and fish as often as possible - e.g. on week-ends, during extended vacations - and by looking to a future where involvement in the wage economy and adherence to land-based activities are not mutually exclusive.

It is evident from listening to the opinions expressed by the young trappers themselves about the land and their relation to it, that in no way can this kind of part-time hunting and trapping be termed "recreational" or "sport" hunting.

Ages of young hunter/trappers interviewed:

17 - 1
19 - 1
21 - 2
23 - 1
24 - 3
25 - 1
26 - 3
27 - 1
28 - 5
29 - 4
30 - 4

26

Views on the land expressed by young people interviewed:

- 1) "I live off the land at Colville and don't like when the white people use it for waste. I worry about my land a lot."
- 2) "That is the way I always made my living, as a trapper and I'll never change. 16 years in the bush, and still I never got tired of it, my land provides me with the food I eat, with the snowshoes that I wear on my feet, you name it, and it all come out of the land, so why should I leave it. I love my land and as far as pipeline is concerned, I don't care one bit for it. Take your pipeline and your junk back south and leave the land as it was and everyone will be happy."
- 3) "If I do depend on jobs when one is not always available, how could I manage to feed the family? this is why I always trap, and hunt, also I depend greatly on land and animals for food, clothing, and means of money."

- 4) (summarized by translator) "...he never went to school and doesn't speak English or read it or write it. He always trapped, fished, and hunted, ever since he was old enough, so therefore he depends on land greatly for making his living. He never had a job, but just labor job now and then, so he will trap, fish, and hunt as long as he can."
- 5) "... (I've lived in Inuvik for 13 years working)....but when spring comes I still go out hunting muskrats - some times I go hunting caribou with my brothers...if a man works hard trapping he still can make a good living"
- 6) "A lot of people use this land as the basic material for living and this land should be preserved for them. It is our land."
- 7) "This land is very important to us. It is our livelihood. We have to think of our children for the future and try to use it as wisely as we can."

